



Elements of Art



Created by Edgar Campos
Spring 2012

The Elements of Art

One of the main objectives of the course is to learn how to critically analyze art works; how to communicate about the arts. To do this, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the elements that art encompasses. The elements are what the artist uses to create the work (with or without intent) and what the critic uses to evaluate the work. For more information regarding the elements of art, please refer to the handouts: “The Critical Method”, “The MOMA Approach”, and “Vocabulary”.

Visual Elements

These elements can be applied to discuss any of the visual arts including: painting, photography, set design, graphic design, sculpture, and architecture.

Focal Point
Color
Line
Shape
Space
Texture
Perspective
Pattern
Rhythm
Dynamic
Intensity
Unity & Variety
Contrast
Scale & Proportion
Symmetry & Asymmetry

Focal Point

Visually, the focal point of an image is the place **where your eyes are drawn to first**. Usually the focal point will be highlighted or the most striking color in the work. The focal point can also be reinforced by the implied lines guiding the viewer's perspective.

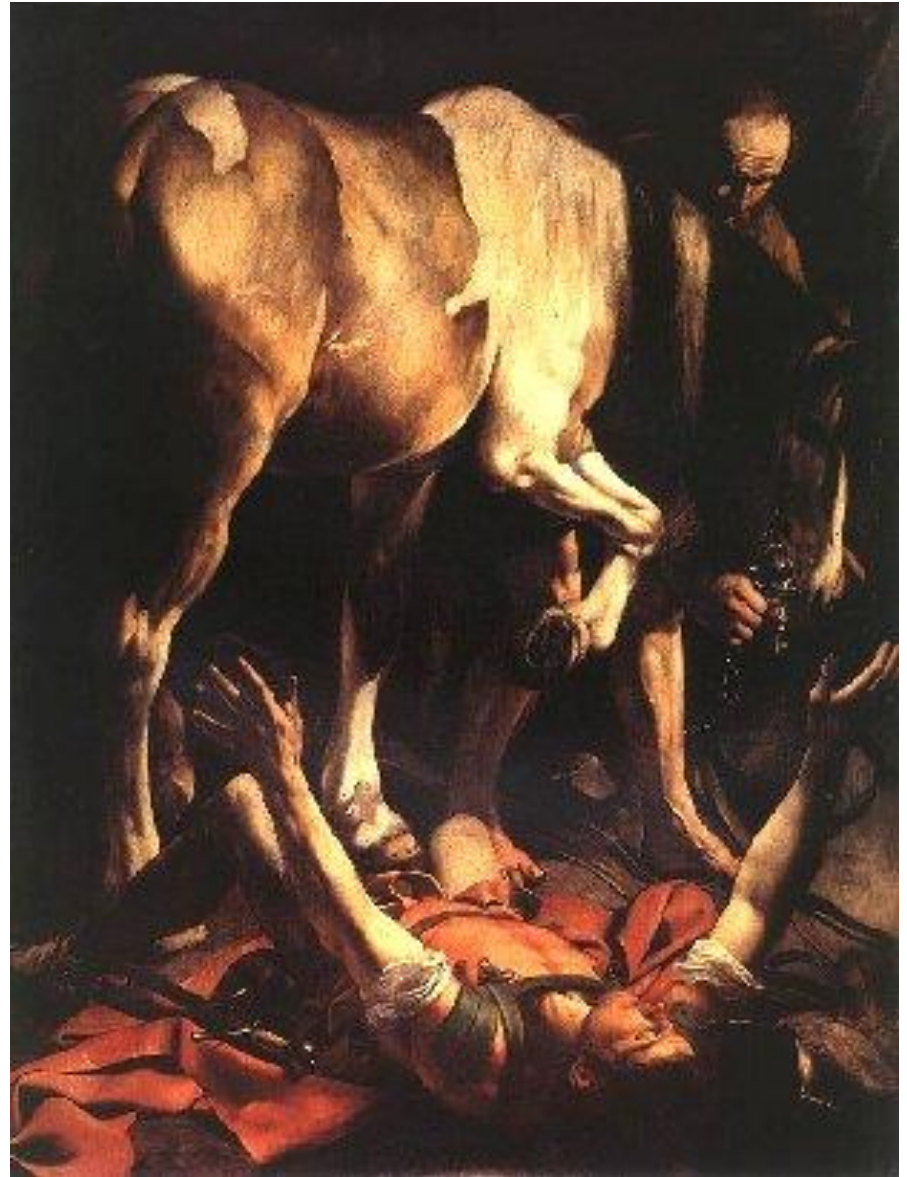
**Where are your
eyes drawn to
first?**

Next?

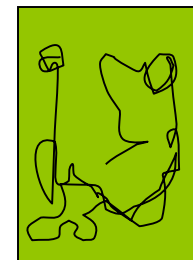
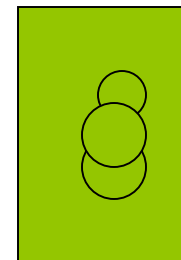
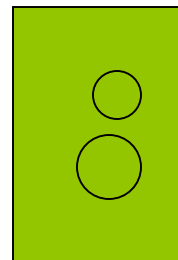
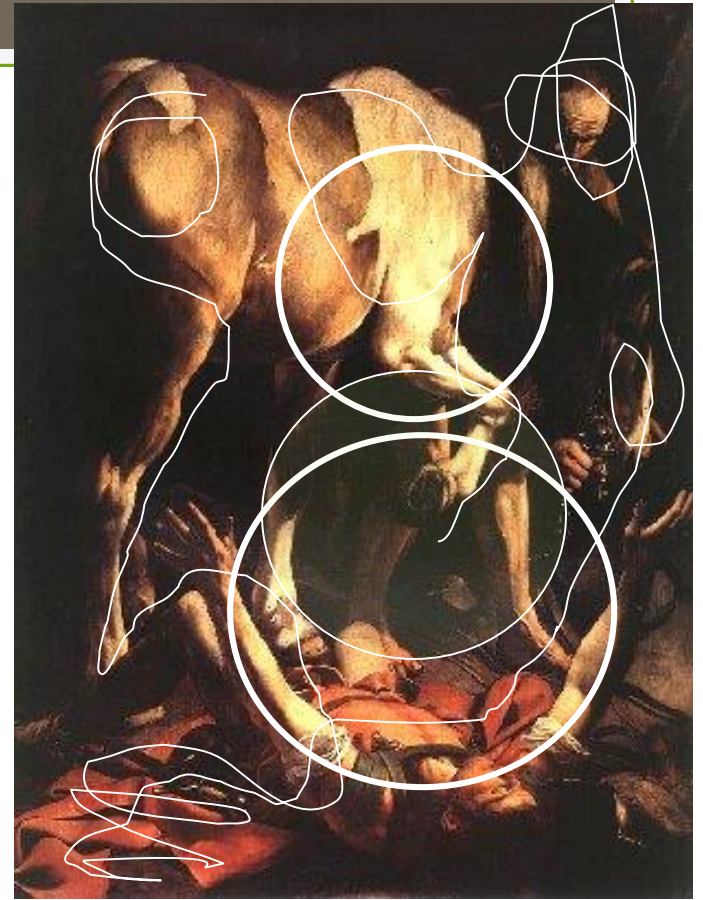
Then?

**Where is the
focal point of
this image?**

The Conversion of St. Paul, Caravaggio



There are arguably several **focal points** within this image. The focal point can also be the place where the action is happening – the dark space between the horse and the man in the foreground. One can also call this place a **focal area**. This image is particularly entertaining because it has layers of focal points and areas. The artist highlights places all over the entire space of the canvas which automatically takes the viewer's eyes all over the image. After the immediate two or three first attractions, my eyes are then led to the horse's rump, down the leg to the hand and kneecap of the soldier(?) to the red cloth and then up the arm on the right to the other man in the image landing where I started. So now we have at least two immediate focal points, then a focal area of potential harm, then a focal path to follow in order to consider the moment. This tells me that the artist was aware of leading the viewer into a story by way of manipulating the visual language. If I were to graph how my eyes are led around the canvas it might look something like this:



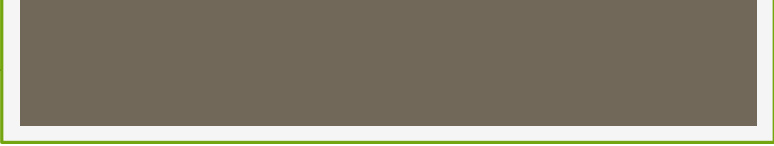
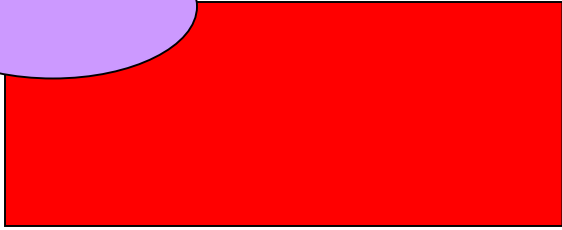
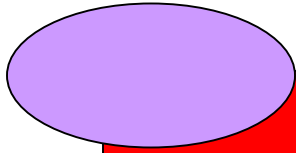
Does this painting have a focal point?



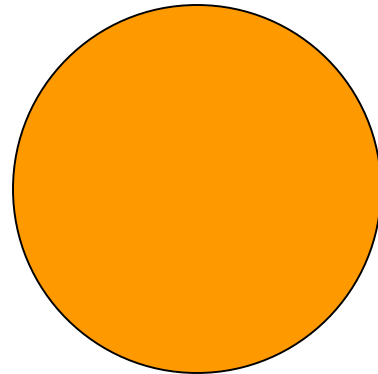
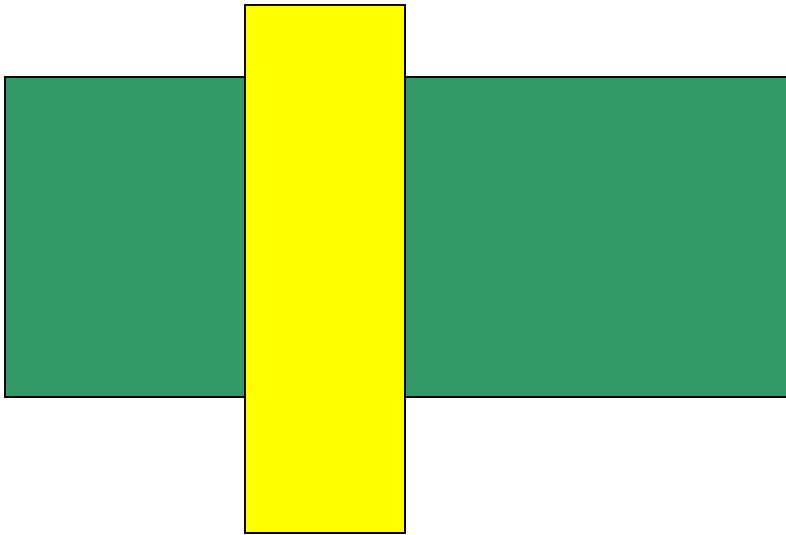
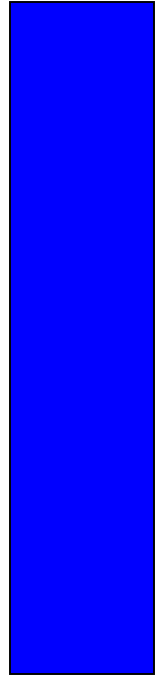
Lavender Mist, Jackson Pollock

Q&A

- If there is no focal point, focal area or focal path, is it still considered Fine Art?
- Yes. These elements are tools, not requirements.



COLOR



Talking about color...

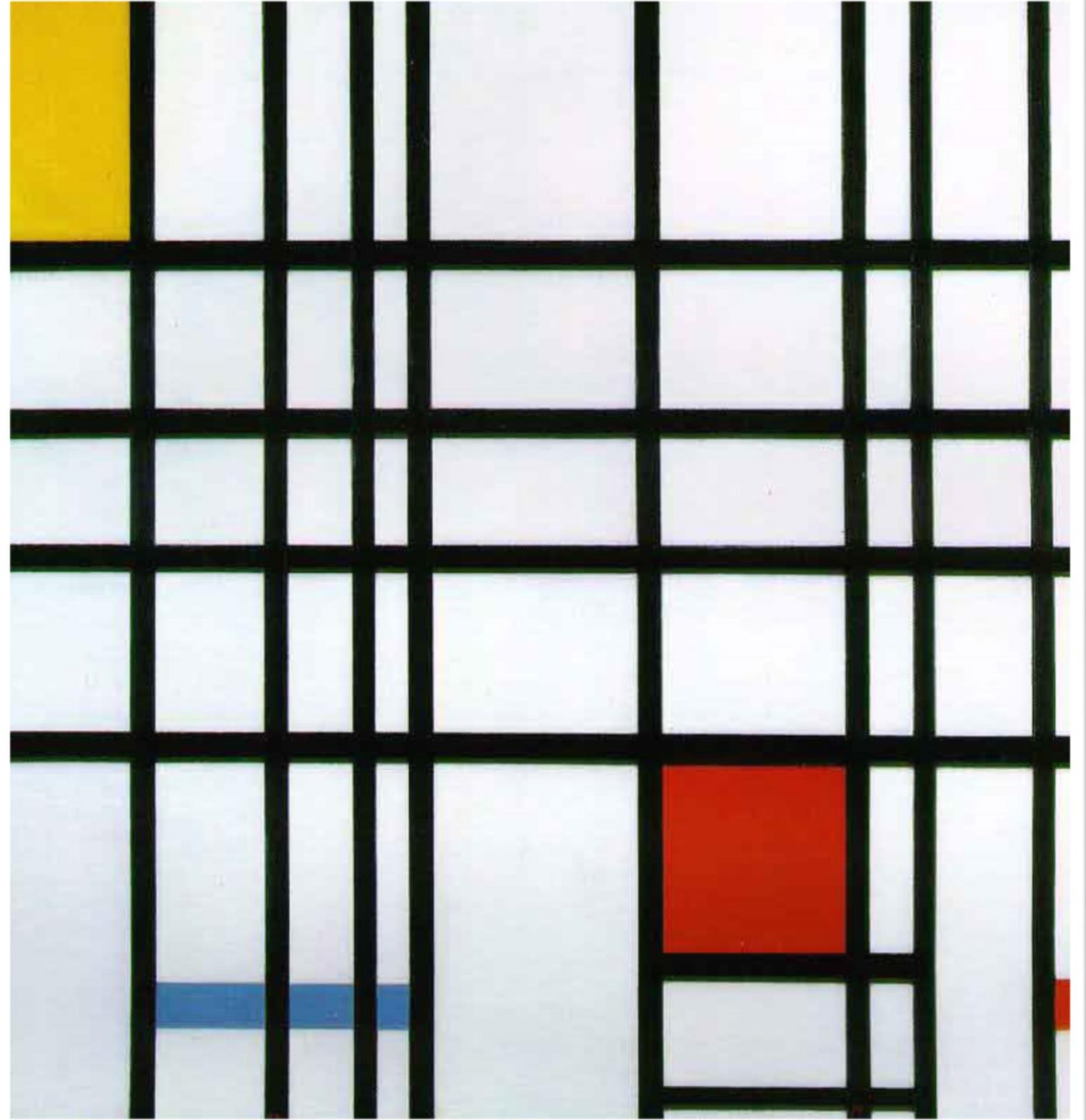
- When one considers the colors the artist uses, one is considering the **PALLETTE**, or the range of hues. If an artist chooses to use all shades of one color from dark to light, the work is **MONOCHROMATIC**. If the artist chooses a variety of hues, the work is **POLYCHROMATIC**.

Primary Colors

Primary colors are the only colors that cannot be made by mixing two other colors together. The primary colors are the foundation the color wheel. The primary colors are:

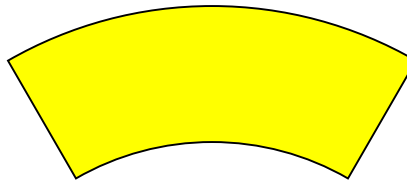
YELLOW, **RED**, and **BLUE**.

Artist:
Piet Mondrian



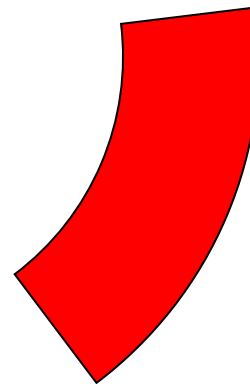
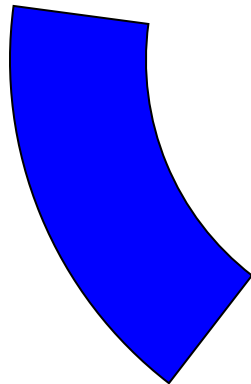
Primary Colors

Mixing primary colors will create secondary colors



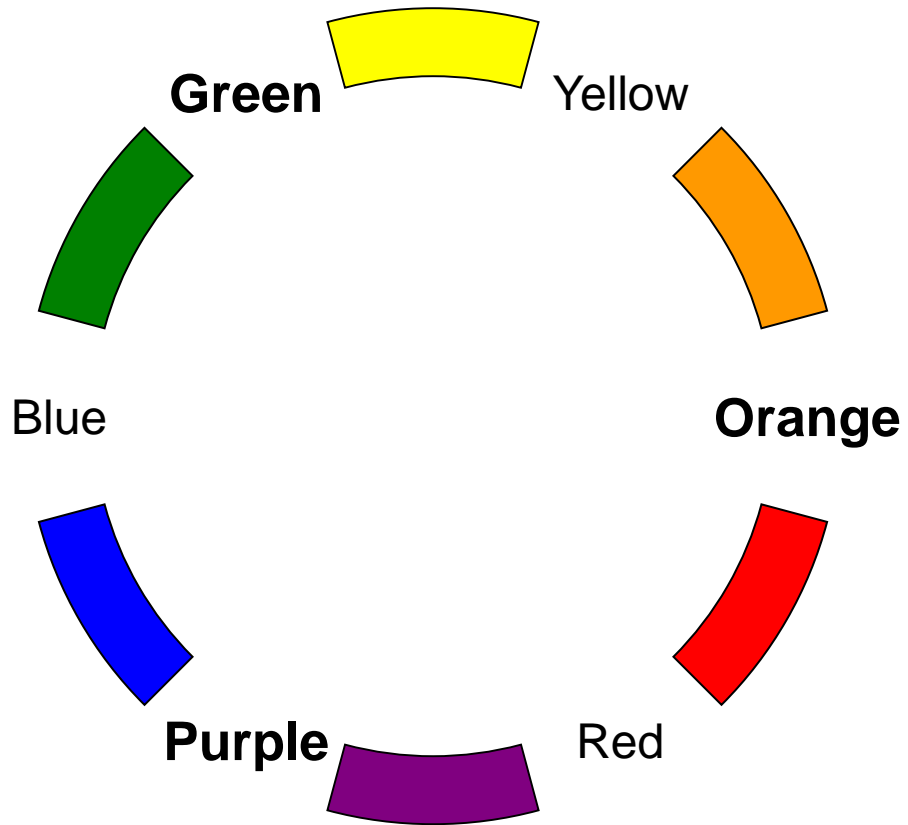
Blue + Yellow = ?

Yellow + Red = ?

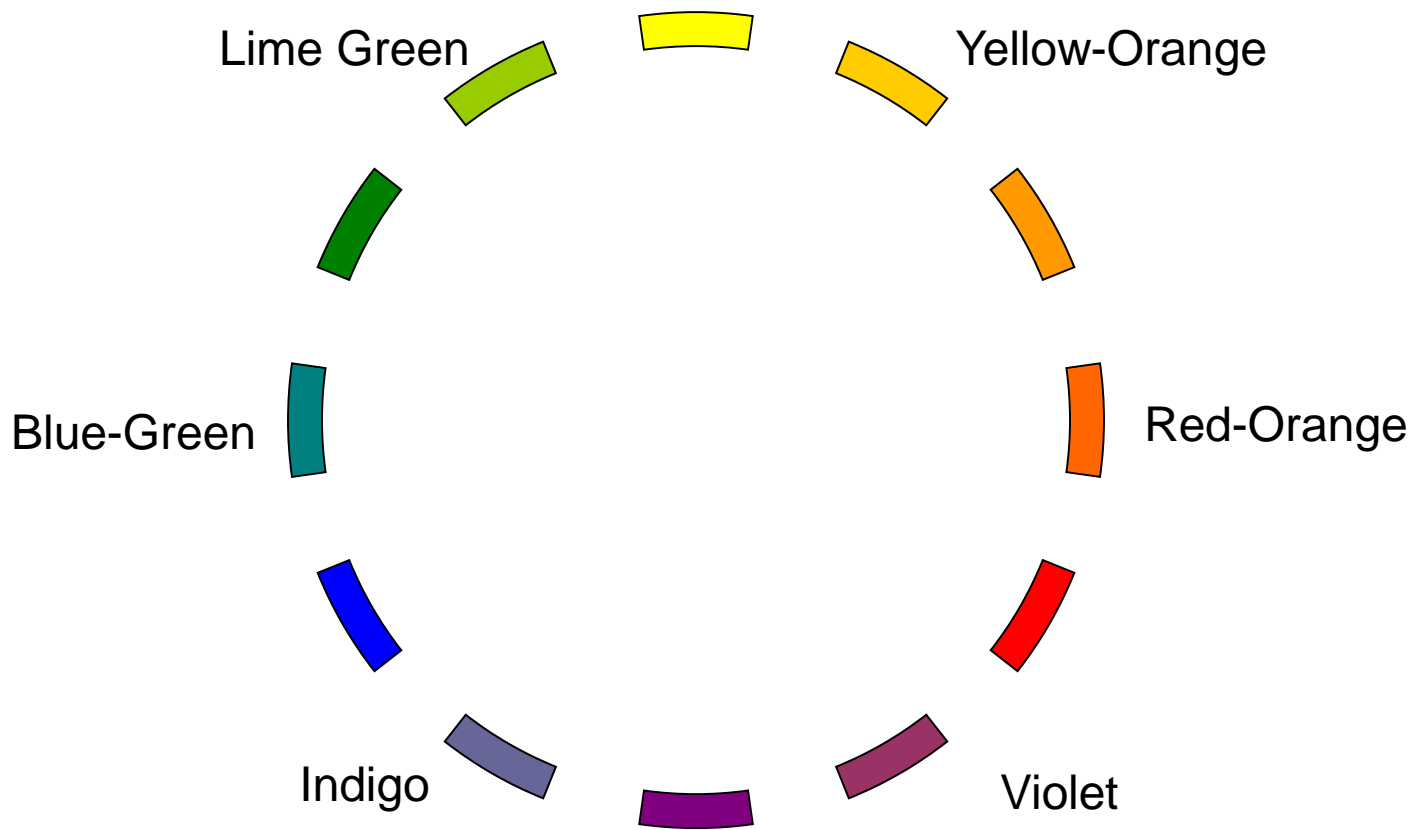


Red + Blue = ?

Secondary Colors

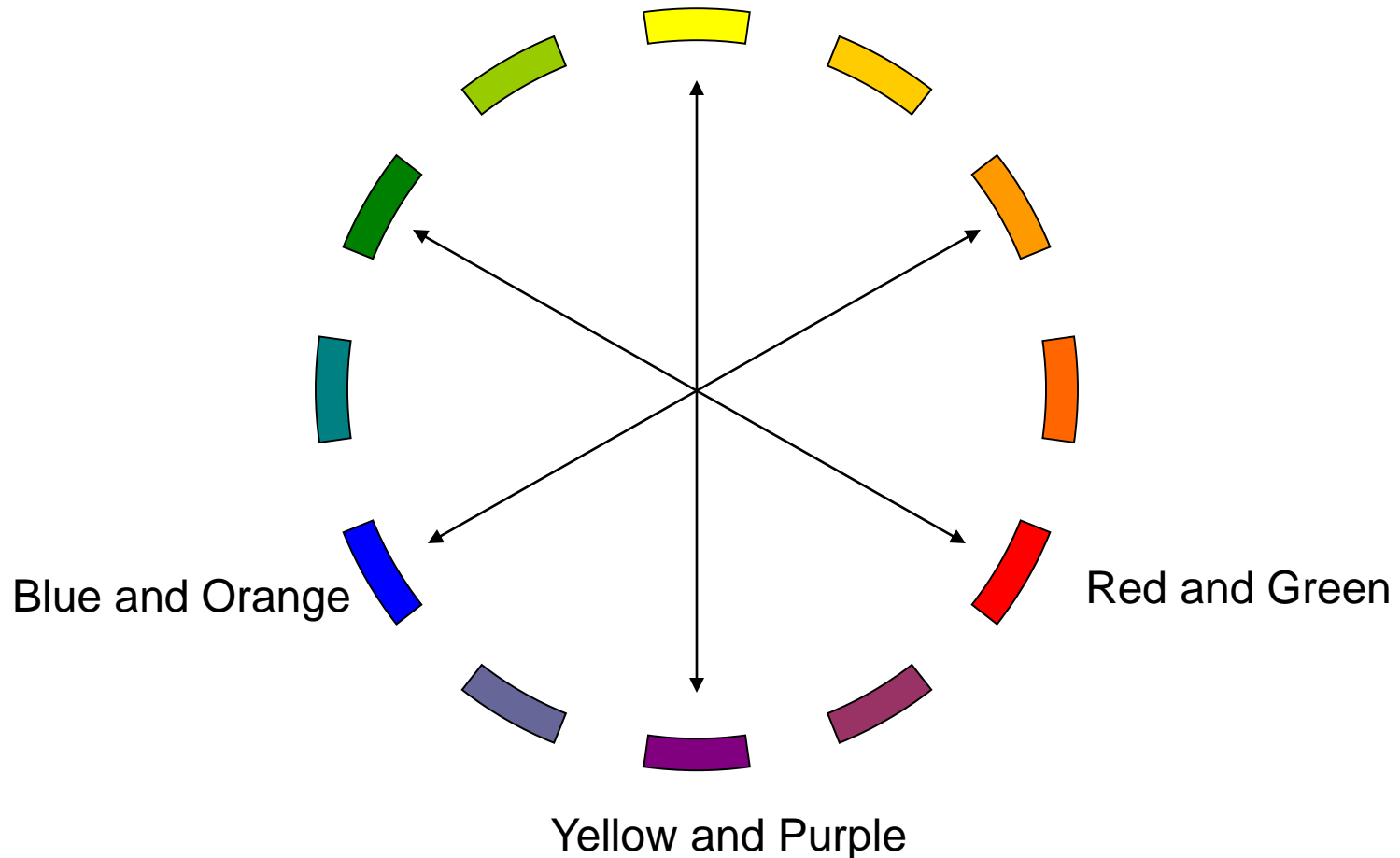


Tertiary Colors

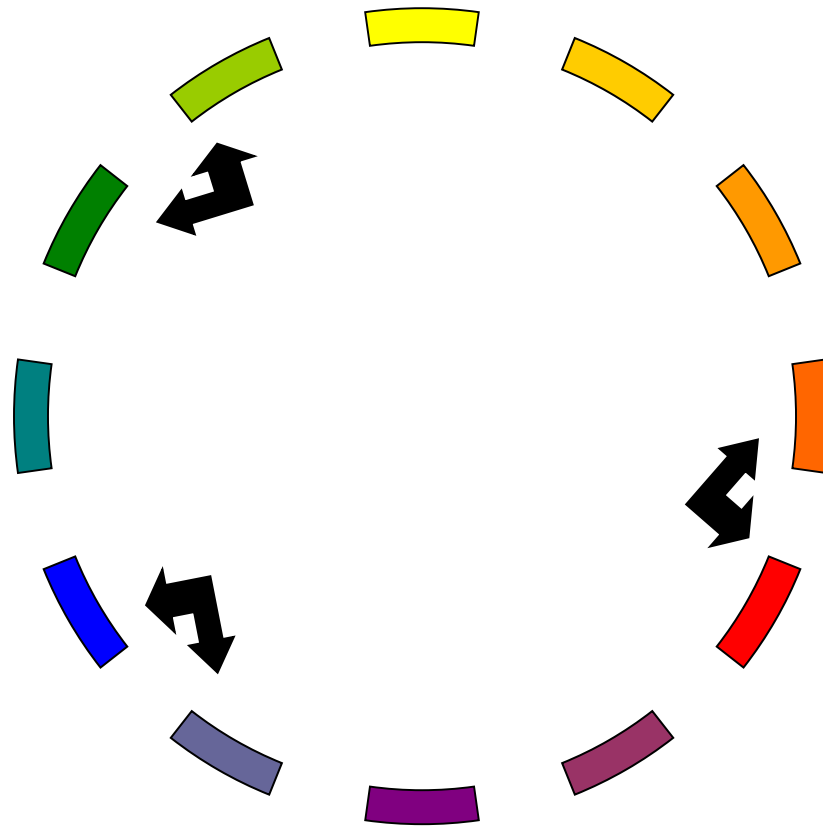


What are complementary colors?

Complimentary colors are directly across from each other on the color wheel.



What are analogous colors?



Adjacent hues, colors that are right beside each other on the wheel.

Tint and Shade

Tint means to add white to make the color lighter.



tint

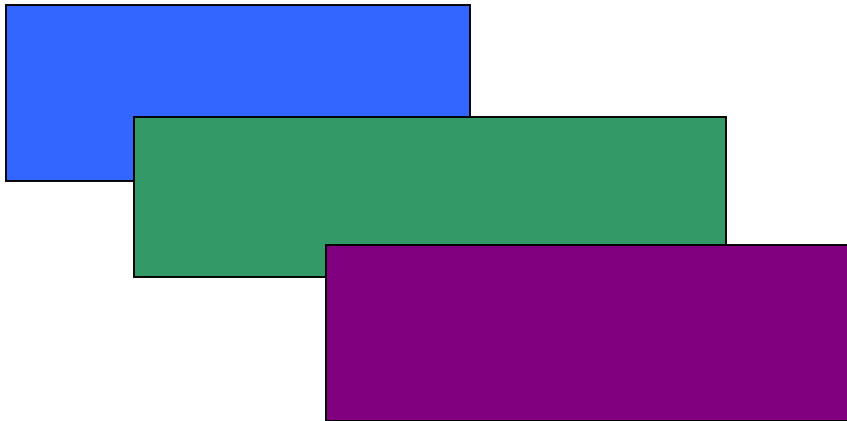
shade

Shade means to add black to make the color darker.

Cool and Warm Colors

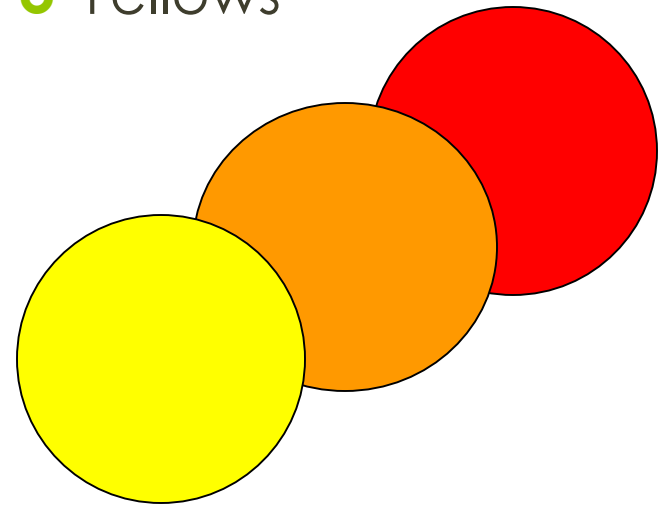
- Cool Colors

- Blues
- Greens
- Purples



- Warm Colors

- Reds
- Oranges
- Yellows



What your favorite color says about you!

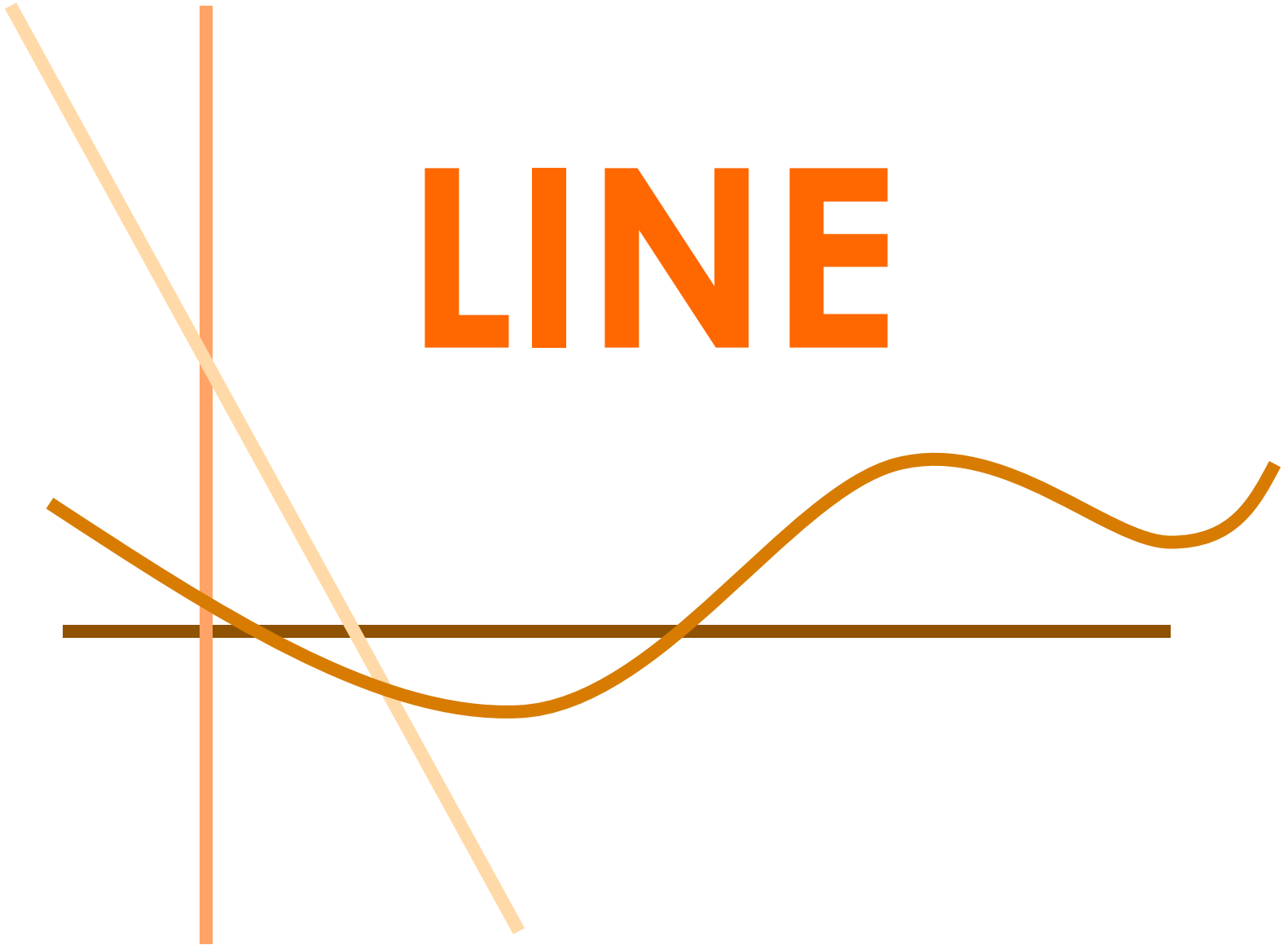
This is from a handout I received a long time ago, no references. It's not truth, it's just for fun.

- **Red** – You are a nonconformist. You work hard, are very optimistic, never let your mood down, and are quick to react.
- **Orange** – You are warm and friendly and use care in choosing your friends. You have a strong sense of justice, and are not impressed by material things.
- **Yellow** – You are interested in people and are glad to be of service to others. You are critical of mind and learn through observation.
- **Green** – You are a very good conversationalist and like people. You have a keen wit and tend to be alert at all times.
- **Blue** – You are devoted and truthful and tend not to show your feelings readily. People tend to have confidence in you.
- **Purple** – You like to live like royalty and enjoy a sense of luxury. You enjoy beautiful things and have a tendency to the romantic.
- **White** – You are sincere in mind and heart, you cooperate well, you are efficient and orderly.
- **Gray** – You seek perfection and are a good manager. You are very objective and seek constant development.
- **Black** – You are very self-assured and like meeting interesting people. You are critical in your choice of companions and seek perfection.
- **Brown** – You are patient and a hard worker. You are always ready to help others, have a strong sense of family loyalty, and do not take uncalculated risks.

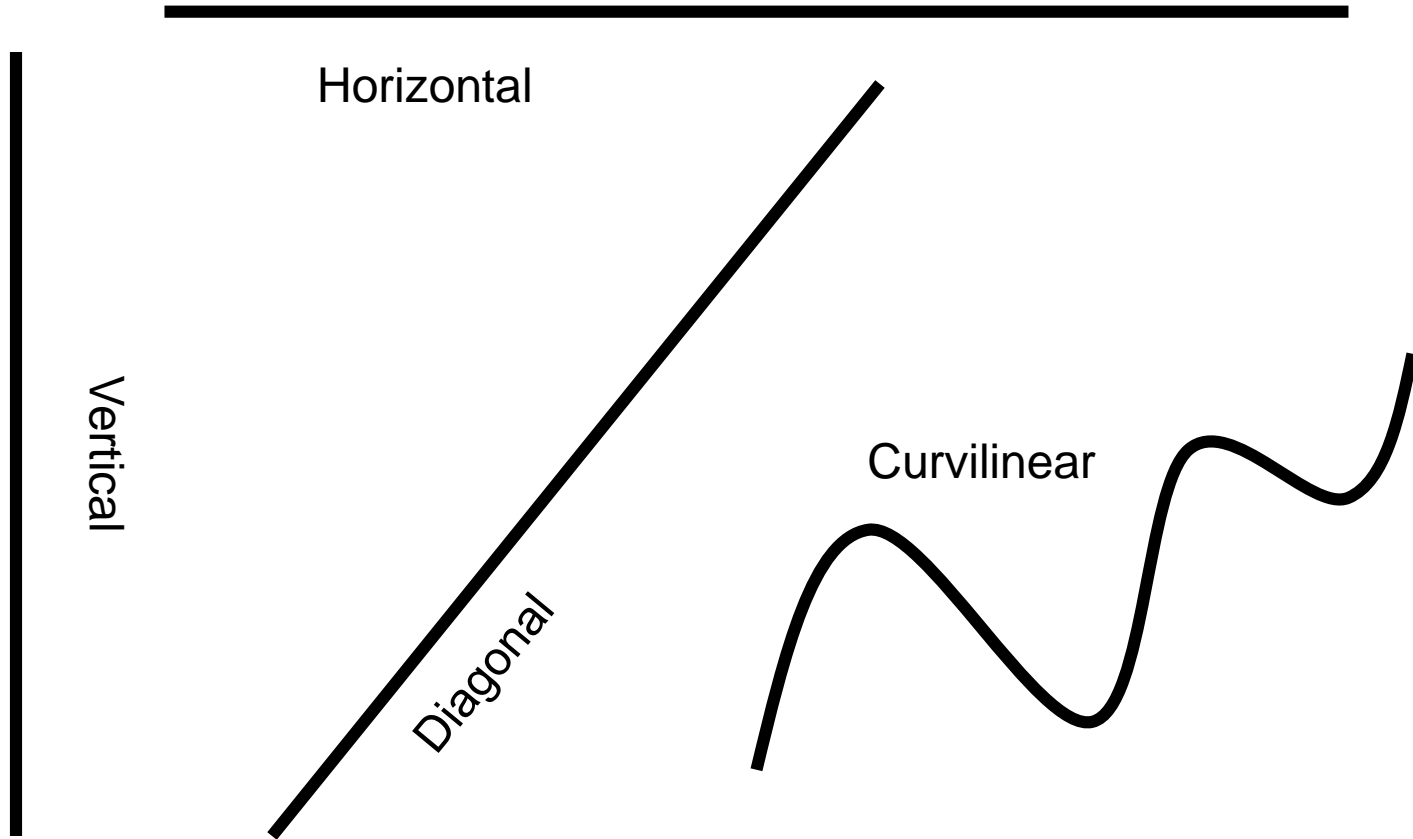
Color Symbolism

- Color is often used to make a reference to something symbolic, like the color associated with a royal family. Be careful about interpreting colors. Colors mean different things in different cultures.

LINE



Four Basic Types of Lines



Implied Line

- Implied Line is the line inside the object within in the art work. For example, an image of a soldier standing tall has an implied vertical line in the stance. Each of the lines imply different meanings.
- **A vertical line can imply nobility. A horizontal can imply calm or rest. A diagonal line can imply movement. A curvilinear line can imply grace.**

Nobility and Movement

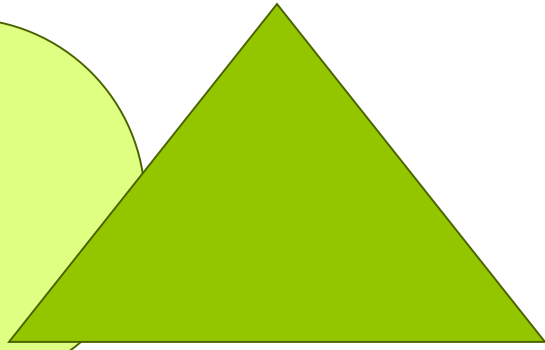
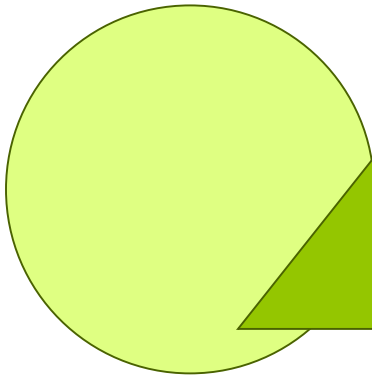


Contour Line

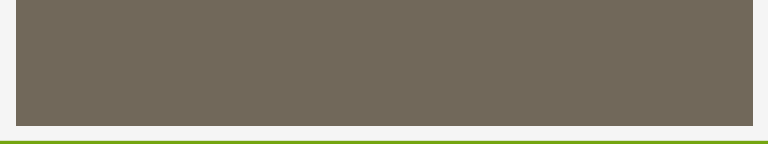
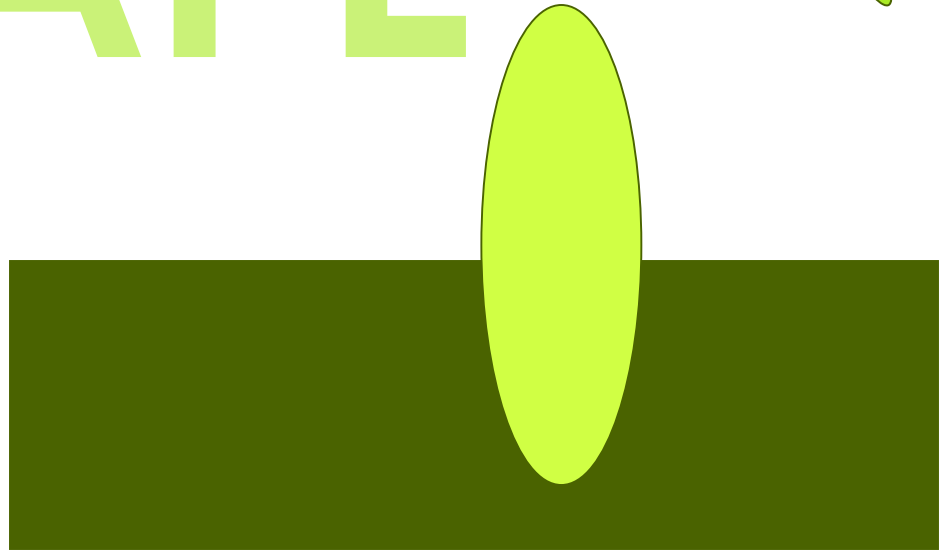
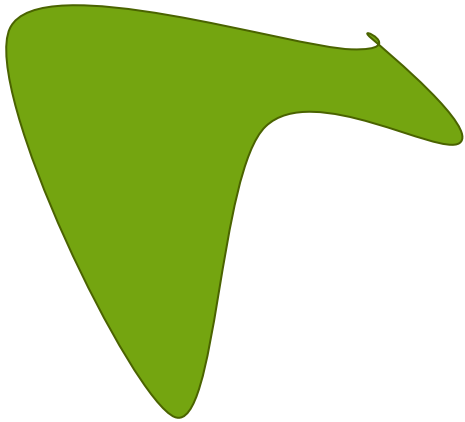
- Contour line is the outside line, or the line that distinguishes the outer edge of the object within the art work.

Giotto
The Mourning of Christ
c. 1305
Fresco
Cappella dell'Arena, Padua



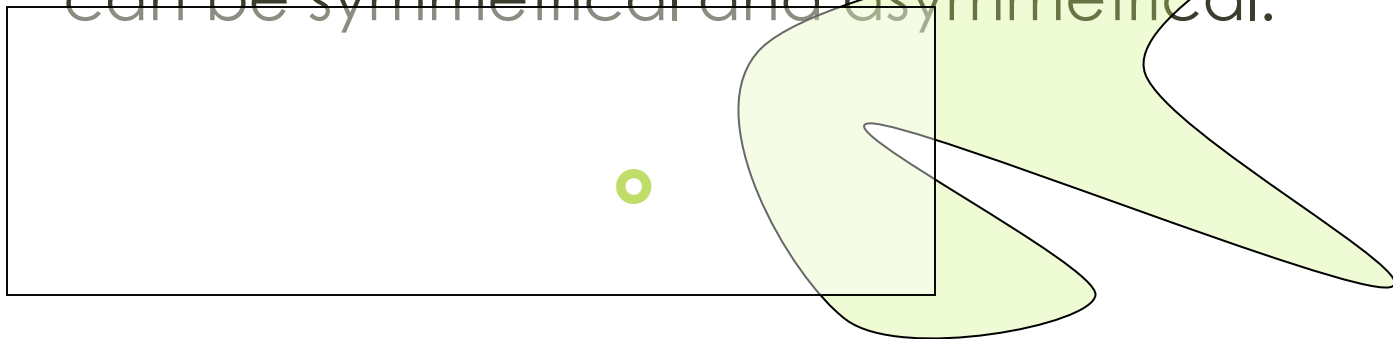


SHAPE



Organic and Geometric

Organic shapes are natural shapes which can be symmetrical and asymmetrical.



Geometric shapes are 'man-made' or machine made shapes, mathematically deduced, with clear sharp edges.

Speaking of shapes...

- When critiquing a work of art, one can refer to the shapes in relationship to each other by using terms like: adjacent and juxtaposed. **Adjacent** shapes are right beside each other. Shapes that are **juxtaposed** are overlapping or interconnected.

How many
shapes can
you find?



Hendrik van Steenwyck
***St. Jerome in his Study* 1624**

Oil on panel

27 x 21.7 cm

Bequeathed as part of the
Princes Gate Collection, 1978

P.1978.PG.423



Space

- Open and Closed
 - In a painting, if the viewer's eyes are led off the canvas, the space is open, or the painting has an open frame. If the viewer's eyes are kept in the center of the canvas and all the characters and action are within the edges of the frame, the artist has composed a closed space or closed frame.
- Positive and Negative
 - Positive space takes up space, negative space is empty. The positive is the material, the negative is the absence of material.

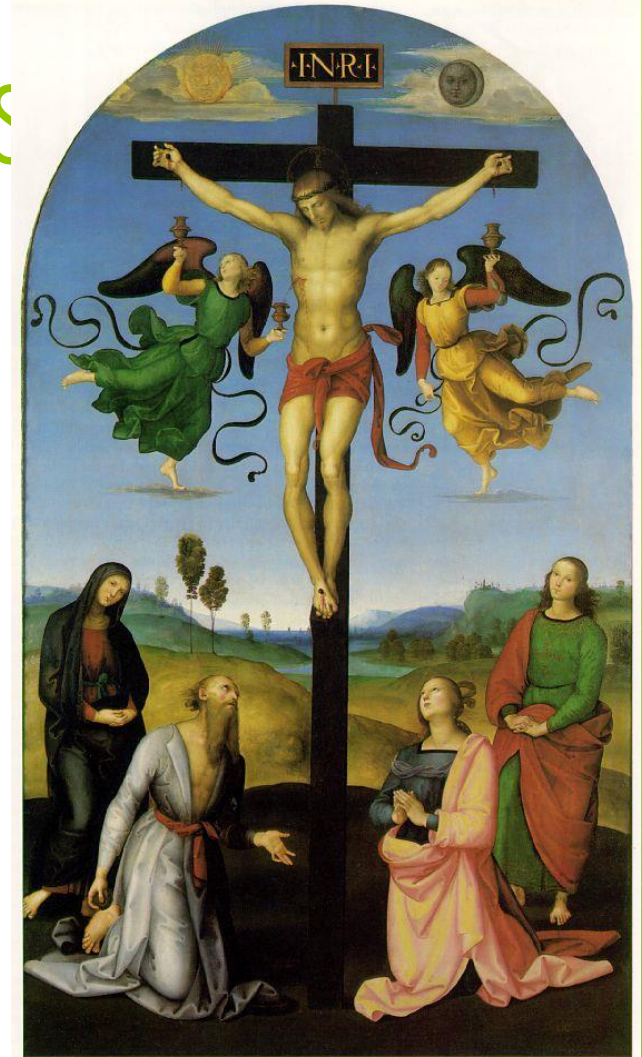


Grunewald
The Mocking of Christ
1503

Grunewald's piece exhibits an open frame, the action leads the eyes all over the canvas and off the edges of the frame.

Raphael's piece exhibits a closed frame, the action is centered and the viewer is focused on the main action.

Raphael
Crucifixion with
Sts Mary Virgin,
Mary Magdalen,
John and Jerome
c. 1503



Positive and Negative...

All positive space, no negative space, no room between them.



Brancusi, *The Kiss*, 1917

Lots of negative space employed to create tension, dynamic embrace.



Canova, 19th Century, NeoClassical (Reproduction)

TEXTURE

Texture refers to what the surface feels like, the tactile sense, as well as the representation of texture.

Texture

What would it feel like to touch these surfaces?

Photography by Angel Vawter



<http://www.angelphotography.com/Page%2018.html>

Texture can be surprising. The smooth texture of skin in this close up of a marble sculpture by Bernini is remarkable. Notice the veins, soft waves, in the top of the male hand. Also, notice the smooth texture of the drapery.



Creating texture...

Camille Claudel's *The Waltz*
1891-1905



Transition from
smooth skin
to rough,
bumpy, rippling
base



Oppenheim, *Fur Covered Cup*

PERSPECTIVE

Perspective refers to the “point of view”. There are several different types of perspective: aerial, atmospheric, linear or one-point, and two-point perspective for a horizon line.

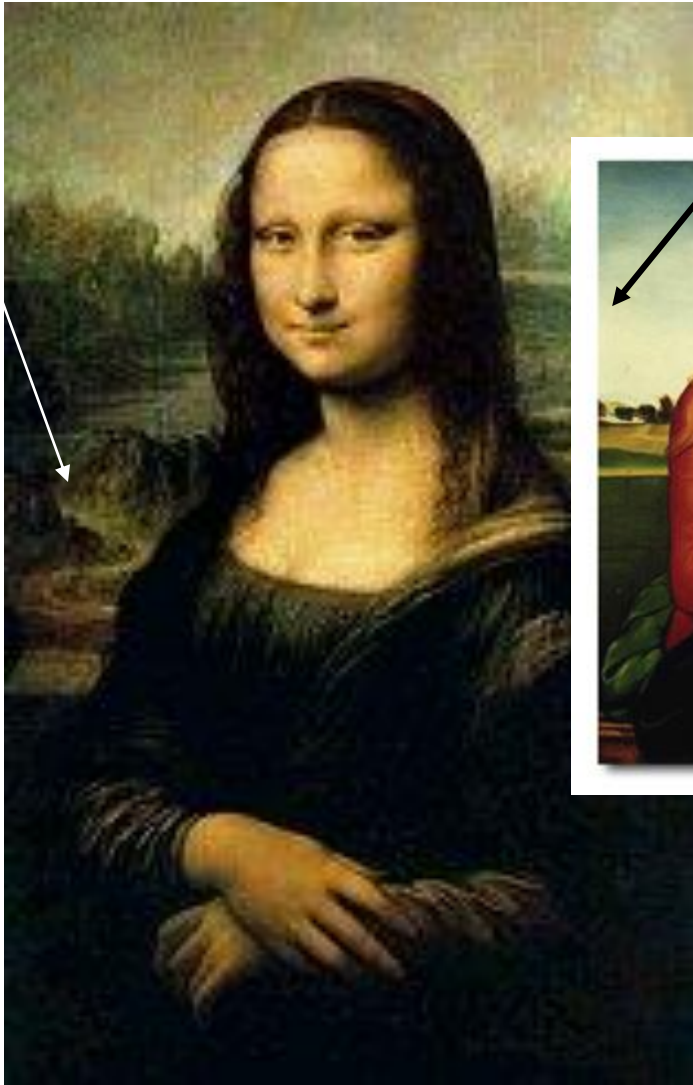
Aerial Perspective

- Aerial perspective is a “bird’s view,” seen from above, high angle.



Aerial view of the grand canyon

Atmospheric Perspective gives the illusion of a great distance in the background of the image.



Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* 1507



Raphael's *Cowper Madonna*

Linear Perspective



Linear Perspective is also referred to as one-point-perspective. This perspective leads the eyes to a vanishing point that disappears deep into the image. The lines leading to the vanishing point created by the rails are called orthogonals.

http://ceiba.cc.ntu.edu.tw/20734100/perceptual_gallery/6.htm

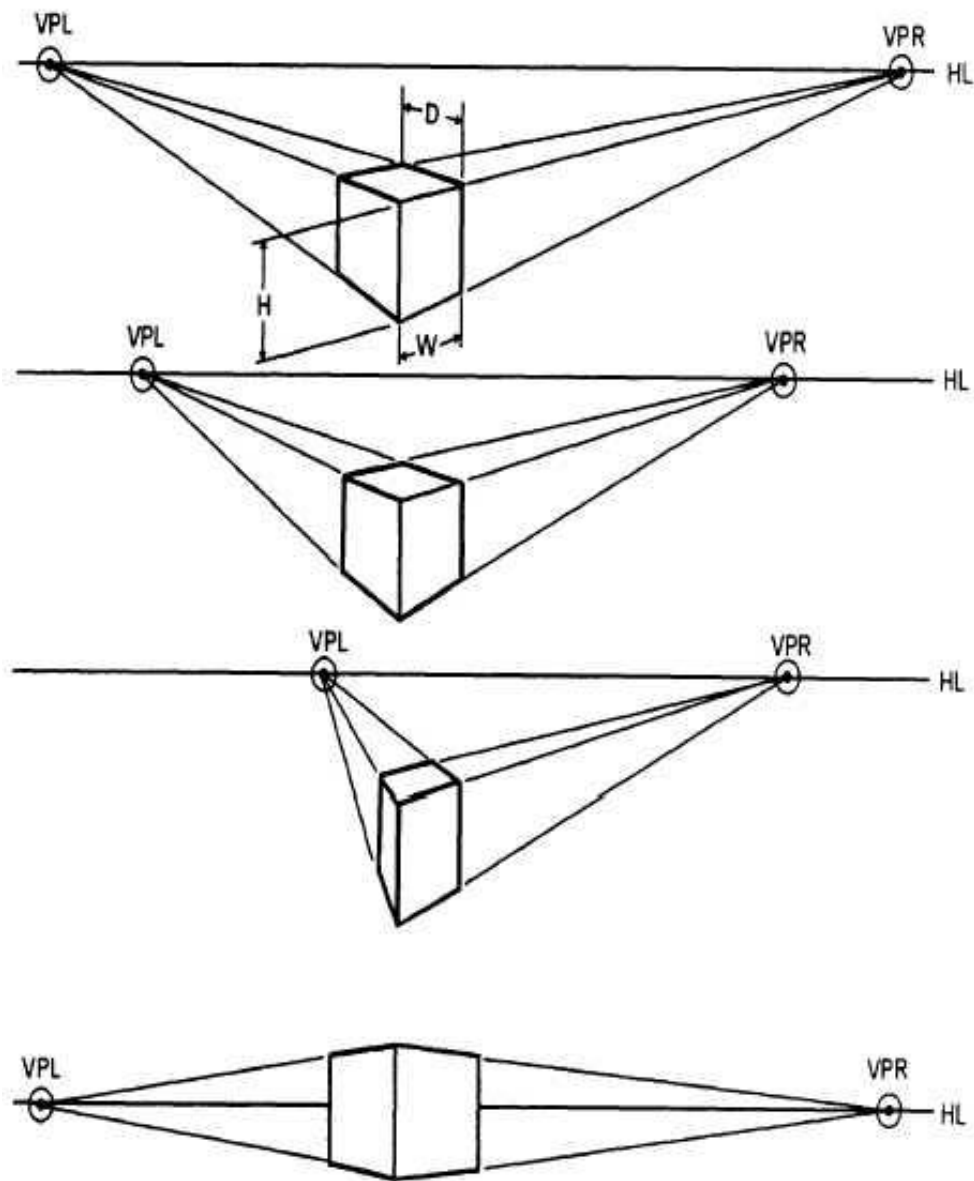
A sample of the work from Design
Graphics at Penguin High School
by **Claudia Gleave, 10th Grade**

Two-Point Perspective



<http://www.tased.edu.au/schools/penguinh/penguin/design.html>

How to draw
with using a
two-point
perspective.



DMV2CN0513

PATTERN

There is power in pattern and impact in the variation on that pattern.

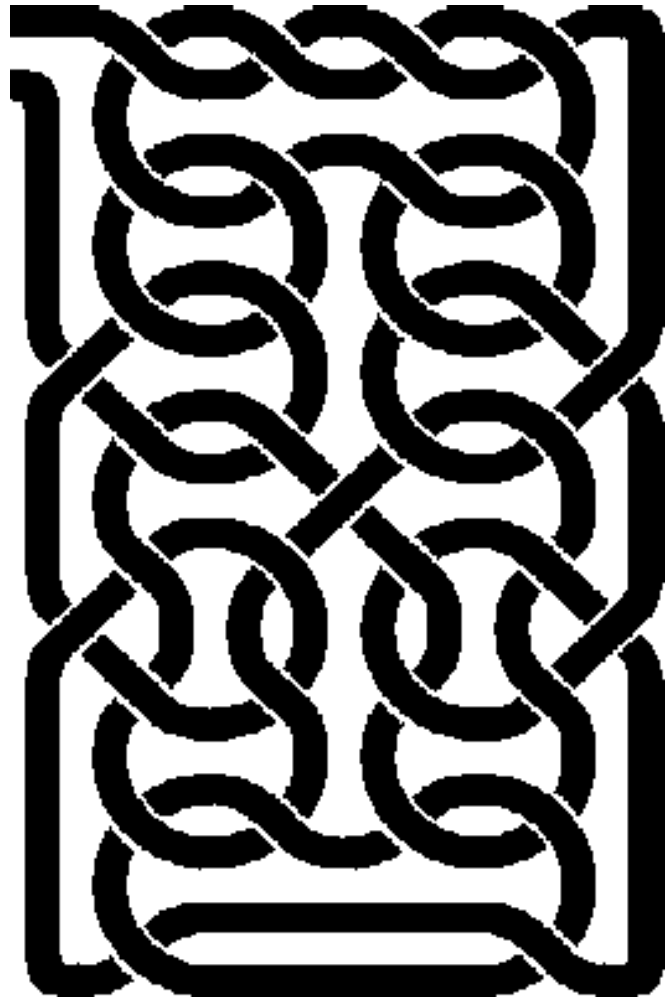


Where does your eye go first?



Patterns are everywhere...

- Patterns happen when an element recurs or repeats throughout the art work. Patterns help establish the rhythm of the overall work. When an established pattern is broken, it can provide **variety** and/or **dissonance** for the audience.



Organized Pattern

PATTERN BY SCOTT

This was created by typing in the [celtic font](#), in CorelDraw, and exported as a .jpg, which my wife switched to a .gif for me (cuz I'm a twit), which I then dropped from 256 colors to 2. Then I squished the height by about 20%. Then I put it on my site for you to see!

The hardest part...
was planning it all out.

<http://scott.carterjackson.com/celtic/celticexamples.html>

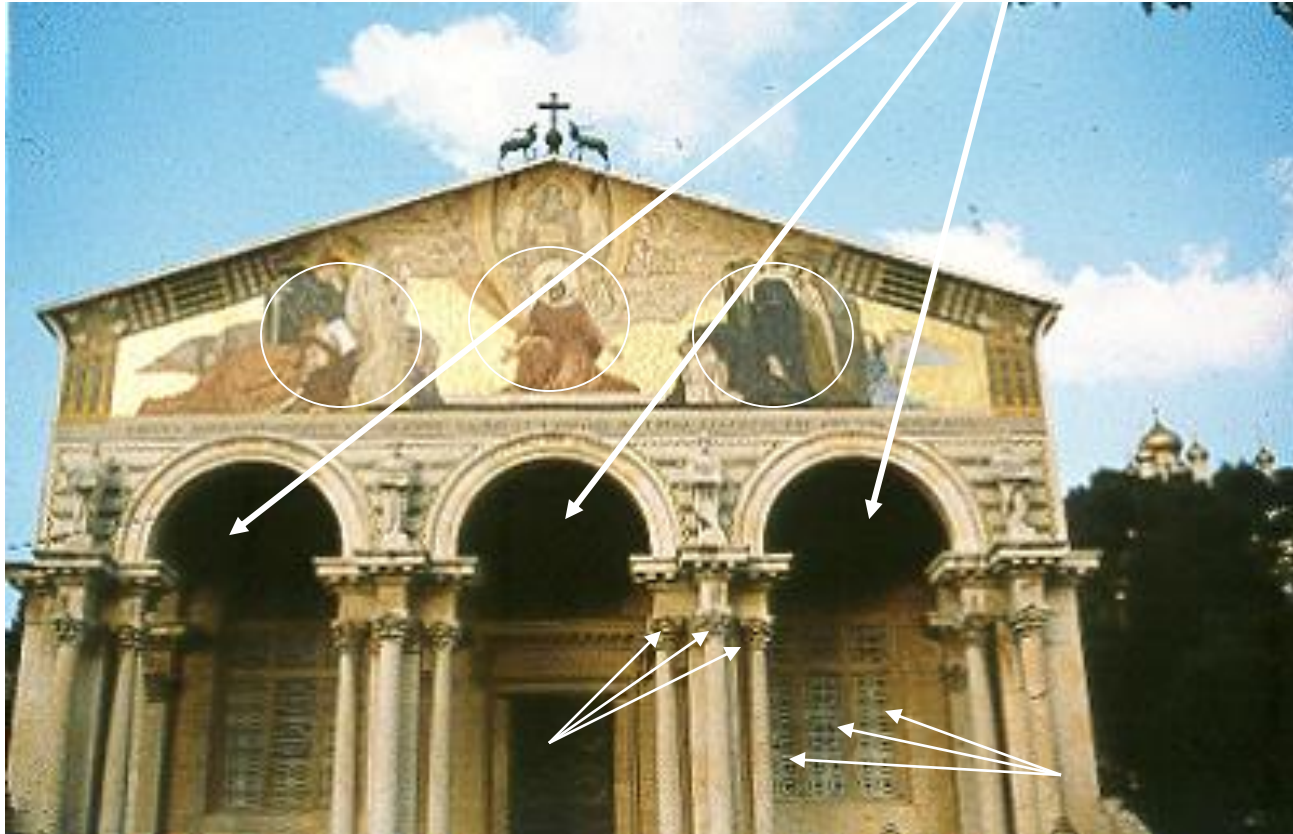
What patterns can you find?

Façade of the Church of All Nations (Church of the Agony), in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem



<http://www.amitravel.com/photos.html>

Pattern of groups of threes. How does this pattern establish a rhythm?



RHYTHM

- Rhythm is the relationship between the recurring elements in a work of art. When analyzing a work of art, rhythm is discussed with pattern. A visual rhythm can be quick or slow, depending. The rhythm helps establish the **dynamic**.

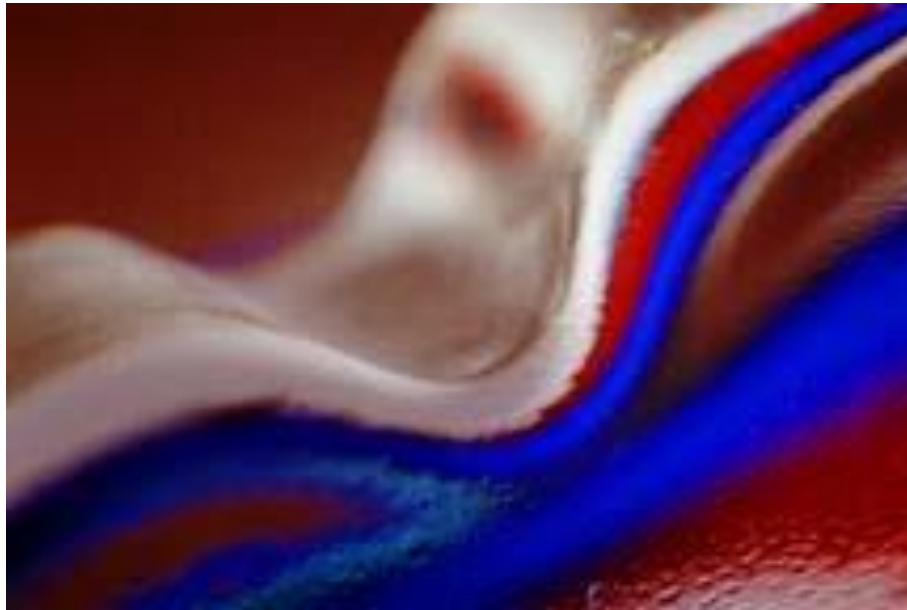


http://ia.hcs.ohiou.edu/courses/hci_a201/winter2001/woodburn_j/assignment_2/assignment2.html

Great Website!!!

Rhythm in visual art can be connected to a musical rhythm. Our eyes will travel at a predetermined pace created by the artist.

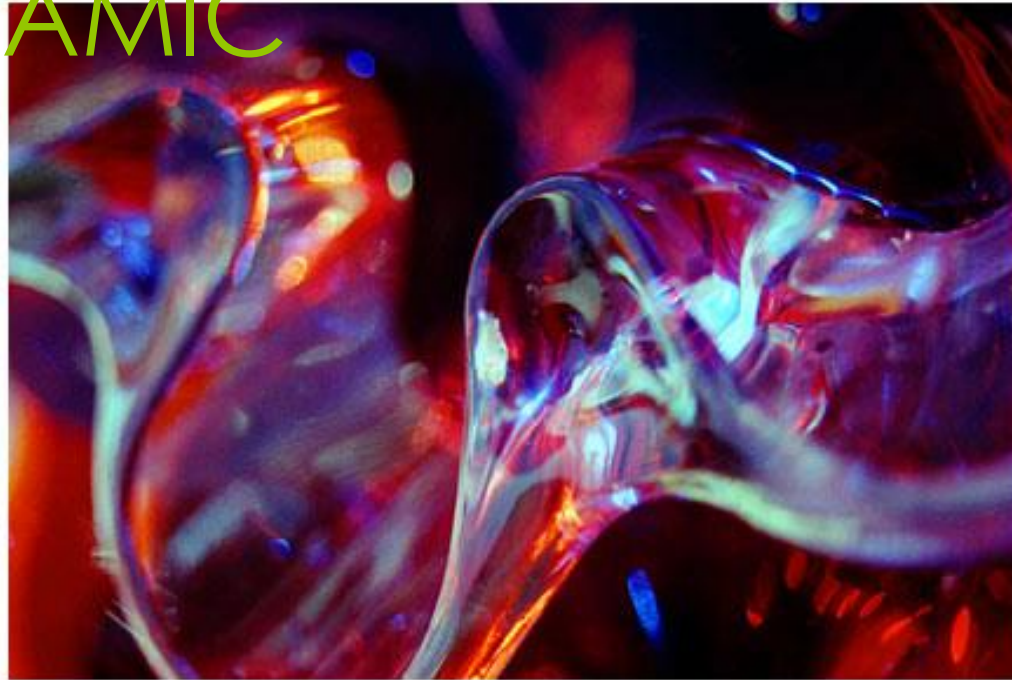
Rhythm



Meditations en Chroma Portfolio
Sullivan Photographics

<http://www.verinet.com/~will/Chroma.html>

DYNAMIC



Meridian

Sullivan Photographics

<http://www.verinet.com/~will/Chroma.html>

This piece is dynamic: it includes emphasis on pattern, rhythm, and intensity



Serenity

Meditations en Chroma Portfolio
Sullivan Photographics

<http://www.verinet.com/~will/Chroma.html>

INTENSITY



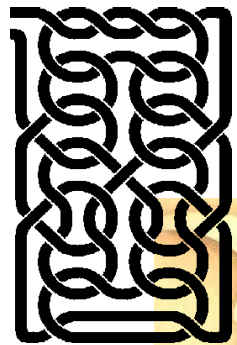
Orange sky on Highway 35

Amy Landrum, 2003

Intensity is the purity of a hue, and the force of a visual image.

Unity & Variety

If a work of art shows UNITY in the elements, that means the elements are combined in an orderly arrangement. If the work of art shows VARIETY, it combines elements that are seemingly opposite or unexpected to produce a desired effect. This is tricky because an art work can show Unity through Variety.



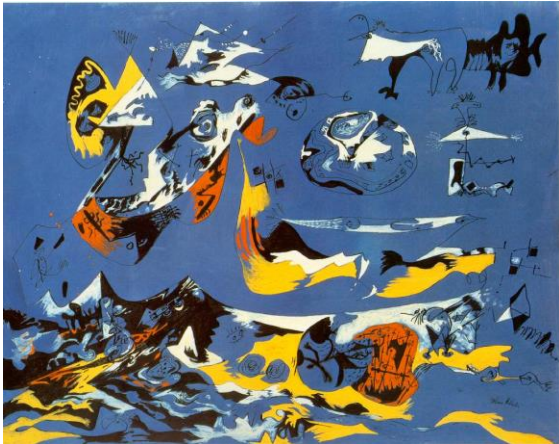
These images demonstrate Unity in use of color, line, and shape.



These images demonstrate Variety in use of color, line and shape.



- **Contrast** This refers to the value contrast in a work of art. There is high contrast and low contrast. High contrast refers to a great difference between colors or elements, and low contrast refers to a slight difference between colors or elements.



This image (by Pollock) shows high contrast in color and symmetry.

This image (by O'Keeffe) shows low contrast in color and symmetry.



Scale & Proportion

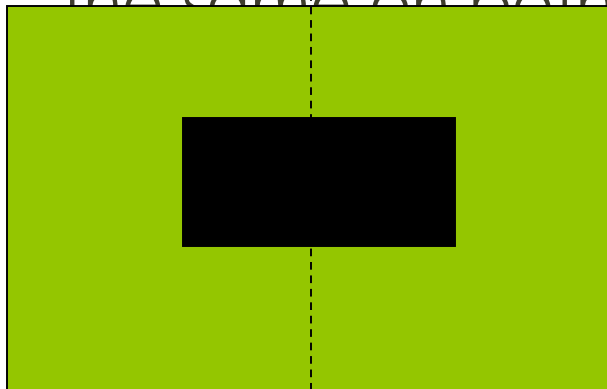
- When analyzing and critiquing a work of art, it is important to consider the scale of the work in question. In architecture, scale refers to the mass of the building in relationship to the human body. Proportion refers to the 'rightness' of the size of the pieces in a total work. For example, a sculpture of a human being involves the hands and feet in proportion to the rest of the body. Sometimes the artist will choose to make pieces disproportionate on purpose to achieve a desired effect.

Symmetry & Asymmetry

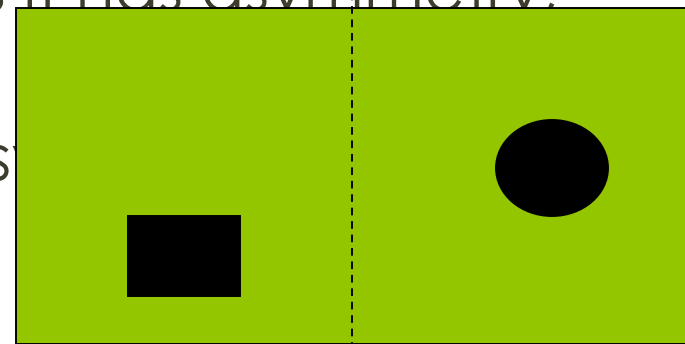
- If you fold an image in half and it is the same on both sides it has symmetry, it is symmetrical.

- If you fold an image in half and it is not the same on both sides it has asymmetry.

Symmetrical



Asymmetrical

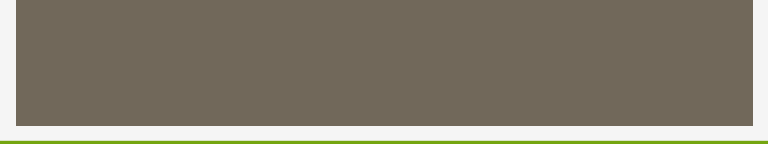


be as

Visual Elements

These elements can be applied to create or critique any of the visual arts including: paintings, photographs, film scenes, stage designs, commercials, design layouts, sculpture, architecture and fine craft.

Focal Point
Color
Line
Shape
Space
Texture
Perspective
Pattern
Rhythm
Dynamic
Intensity
Unity & Variety
Contrast
Scale & Proportion
Symmetry & Asymmetry



For more information regarding the elements of the Fine Arts, refer to the text “Perceiving the Arts” by Dennis J. Sporre, any edition.

The End